

The Art Institute of Chicago Quarterly

VOLUME 54, NUMBER 2: APRIL, 1960

FRESQUE BY ANTOINE PEVSNER

Fresque, 1943-1944. Construction in patinated copper, 45½ inches high, 35½ inches wide, and 12½ to 14 inches deep. Bought from the Wirt D. Walker Fund, accession number 60.4. (Illustrated on the cover)

Reproduced in: *Antoine Pevsner*, Paris (René Drouin), 1947, [pl. 15]; Massat, René, *Antoine Pevsner et le Constructivisme*, Paris, 1956 [pl. 23]; Paris, Musée National d'art Moderne, *Antoine Pevsner*, 1957, pl. xiii.

The Committee on Twentieth Century Painting and Sculpture has recommended, and the Trustees have approved, the purchase of *Fresque*, a major work by one of the principal and germinal sculptors of the twentieth century, Antoine Pevsner.¹ This purchase fulfills the considered views of the Committee that the field of sculpture is of primary importance in this century and that it is imperative that the holdings of the Art Institute be increased carefully and systematically within this field. This work joins what is still a small, but fine, group of contemporary sculpture.

Pevsner's position in the art of the twentieth century is by no means finally set. In the first place he is still alive, and in the second place nothing is more transient than a reputation. However, if his ultimate place in a scale of values is still uncertain—and I think it will rank high—his historical position is already quite evident. More than any other artist—even than his brother, Naum Gabo—he seems to epitomize that aspect of twentieth-century art which is essentially concerned with purely formal, spatial, and kinetic values in art. Many years ago² the two brothers elucidated these points and defined their position aesthetically: 1) Life is based on space and time, therefore, art should be, too; 2) the concept of space includes more than volume; 3) time is inexpressible solely in terms of static rhythms, and it is necessary to use dynamic and kinetic elements to communicate the essence of time; 4) new forms of expression must be devised for art, and mere representation must cease.³ These notions with their implication that the space around the object is as important as the object are characteristic of the idiom of

twentieth-century art, and it may be safely said that a great cubist canvas by Picasso is, among many other things, a description of space with concomitant implications about time and its passing.

This sculpture by Pevsner is an object which makes no concessions to the beholder, and it is for the beholder to determine for himself what its communicative values are. This, though, is the essence of music, at least in its more abstract forms. The meaning consists of the aural and temporal patterns themselves, and the same thing may be said of Pevsner's construction. This idea of construction, the creation of relationships in space and, by implication, in time, is, of course, the essence of the name by which Pevsner has long been known, a constructivist. This sculpture means only the relationships which are established or implied in it by the artist. These relationships are patterns in space, in color, in texture, and above all, as these are all seen in light. Because the light necessarily is continuously mutable, the very existence and reality of time itself is implicit. Put another way, the sculptor has constructed something which is real and which within itself contains relationships. To ask what these mean, is like enquiring into the meaning of a hillside (which really cannot be explained as much as it can be described), and in the description may lurk the implication of past actions which may (or may not) constitute a meaning. In the case of *Fresque*, the past actions are those of the sculptor himself, whereas in the hillside, the implicit actions are the accidents of nature, and, possibly, of man.

But there is another aspect of constructivist art and of Pevsner's, in particular, which must be noted: that is the simple fact of its gentle and essentially lyrical beauty. This object is eloquent in its carefully stated relationships, and these are done in terms of the greatest elegance. Pevsner is unavoidably and inevitably a child of his time and place. It is not for nothing that the world which produced him also produced a Gurdjieff, not that there was any connection be-

(Please turn to page 19)

Published quarterly October, December, February, April, by The Art Institute of Chicago, Michigan Avenue at Adams Street, Chicago 3, Illinois. Telephone CE 6-7080. Correspondence pertaining to subscriptions should be sent to the Editor of Publications at that address. Entered as second class matter April 5, 1951 (originally entered January 17, 1918) at the Post Office at Chicago, Ill., under the Act of August 24, 1912. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on June 28, 1918. Subscriptions for the Quarterly \$1.00 per year, free to Members. Volume LIV, Number 2.



A LATE, GREAT GUIDO RENI

"Few painters have had Guido's reputation and few have deserved it" (Dezallier d'Argenville). "In style so grand, so easy, and so gracious" (de Piles)—"in sensibility absolutely Mozartian" (Stendhal)—"with divine ingenuousness able to paint only the most perfect things to be seen in this world" (Goethe). "Guido united all the virtues of painting and one may say that his important works are more paintings (if the expression may be permitted) and more complete in everything than those of any of the painters who lived before him, and perhaps than those since" (Cochin). In such terms the leading critics expressed their appreciation of Guido Reni (1575–1642) through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. But, while the cultivated home of 1900 showed a reproduction of his wonderful *Aurora*, Reni's reputation suffered in the Victorian age as part of the general disesteem and misunderstanding of Baroque art. Hegel noticed in some aspects of Reni's work traces of "modern sentimentality," and to Ruskin he was part of a conspiracy of sensual barbarism (along with Correggio, Rubens, and eighteenth-century painting). While Guido was still able to influence French Romanticism, and while the great Swiss critic Burckhardt was his eloquent admirer, it became inevitable that his reputation could only survive in what we would call nowadays "middlebrow" taste: as indeed it did through the popularity of minor religious pictures with all their painterly virtues evaporated in the processes of chromo-lithography. But after the last

war both the critical and popular taste found it possible to look at Baroque art once again; and Rubens, Bernini, Caravaggio and others re-emerged as highly admired artists. In 1954 the city of Bologna staged a Reni exhibition and revealed "a new artist" who, as the editor of the respected *Burlington Magazine* wrote, had "been a victim of a hundred years of ignorant gibes . . . whose name, it is now seen, can sensibly be associated with the names of Caravaggio, Rubens, Velázquez, and Zurbarán, one who at last takes his place among the giants of the early Seicento."

Through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Frank H. Woods, The Art Institute of Chicago has been able to add to its collections one of the most important, and probably the most beautiful, of the late works of Guido Reni.¹ This picture, the famous Colonna *Salome with the Head of the Baptist*, is not only a masterpiece of Baroque art—with the Caravaggio *St. John* in the Nelson Gallery it is among the very few real glories of Italian Baroque painting in this country—it is also a magnificent justification of Guido's traditional fame and the example *par excellence* of that "new artist" modern taste has discovered.

Probably identical with a picture seen in Guido's studio in 1638–9, the *Salome*² was bought by Girolamo Cardinal Colonna from Guido's heirs and thereby entered one of the greatest of Roman private collections. It remained in the Palazzo Colonna throughout the eighteenth century, was listed in all the guides as a principal sight, and was engraved by J. J. Frey in



1745. Having undertaken the huge indemnity imposed on the Papacy by the French at the Treaty of Tolentino, the Colonnas were forced to sell many of their better pictures, including the present painting and the Guercino *Entombment*, also at the Art Institute. The *Salome* passed to England, remaining until recently in the Earl of Darnley's collection at Cobham Hall.

Though every inch of the picture is painted with dazzling suavity and power, the *Salome* is partially unfinished and appears just as it was left at Guido's death.³ The ground on which the figures stand, Salome's inner skirt and feet, the legs of the page holding the salver, and the girl pulling back the curtain, are lightly drawn or brushed in. There would have been a few further refinements, but very little; for his latest pictures show Guido's interest in economical and diaphanous suggestions, in an immediacy and sketchiness that not only demonstrate his brush's power and grace but are a remarkable prophecy of the elegant freshness cultivated by Rococo painters, as well as of the painterliness admired since the Impressionists. Guido's heirs did not, of course, share our contemporary enthusiasm for the not completely finished and for the artistic process *per se*: Guido's students were not called upon to add the final touches only because the master was so awesome and inimitable that what he left was sacred. In the *Salome* we are especially fortunate in possessing an almost fully finished masterpiece in which we can see also a few parts in their first and second stages.

The monumental picture is composed with a simple dignity so natural and so successful that it recalls not other Baroque paintings but classical and Gothic sculpture. Salome grandly turns in passing to consider the Baptist's head. Her two handmaidens enforce her presence and act as chorus; the servant with the curtain—back right and slightly above—deepens the picture space and acts as an introduction to and comment upon the action. These four vertical accents are set in contrast by the half-kneeling page who establishes the diagonal into and up across the picture. This innocent child not only puts the composition into motion but alone looks directly and openly at the subject of the painting, the terrible scene of false triumph, and is thus the spectator's proxy. Just as in classical and Gothic art, the representational terms are simple, noble, and ineloquent. The princely figures are shown, despite all their

magnificence, with extreme and languorous narrative restraint. Indeed, the entire story is told by the extraordinary and ravishing face of Salome, which, both in appearance and subtlety, resembles the faces of Ghandaran and later Buddhist sculpture. But instead of the ecstasy of profound redemption there is quiet, complex, and profound evil.

In his final development, Guido tempered the clarity and naturalness he learned from his Bolognese compatriots, the Carracci, and also the vigorous naturalism of Caravaggio that had deeply influenced him during his visits to Rome. The great early Baroque rhetoric and power were now automatic, and he used them in increasingly personal and imaginative ways. The instinctive ease and grandeur of his talent are quite apparent in the pale faded rose mantle that gathers about Salome with a formal nobility recalling and equalling Raphael. This triumphant modelling the earlier works would prepare one for, but throughout the picture the grace of handling, the subtlety and elegance of color, the strange almost passive intensity, the simplified artistic means—these all have reached a degree of wise and relaxed poetry unprecedented in the earlier work. Notice how the left arm and sleeve of Salome rush forward, simple form after contrasted simple form, into the barely indicated but fully realized hand. The forms exist in intense variety and lucidity with all their softness and with a mysterious element of swiftness and freshness. The sleeve is painted with a few strokes of dull white shadowed through with gray; yet next to the tawny golden dress, the gray comes to optical life as an exciting icy blue.

Examined closely, the sleeve and blouse may be seen to be executed with a frenzied carelessness of handling which, in its luscious economy, authority and dash, strikingly resembles that of an artist at first surprising to connect with Guido—Giambattista Tiepolo. Yet this connexion can be carried further if one considers the extreme degree of natural talent in both artists, their instinctive love of pictorial elegance, and even their same favorite artist—Paolo Veronese. And curiously enough the color in which Guido has painted the page's costume, light acid green, is pure Tiepolo. Surely, if the background of the *Salome* were not dark slate grey over a warm tone, but light on a cooler ground, one would see instantly a Rococo painter and practise. One does not, though,—noticing the short, easy step to the next century—because the range of color is more vigorous: instead of balancing



the page's green costume by an opposing pastel tint, Guido has contrasted it with the full-blooded dusky rose and the cool but rich brown of the page's face and hair. However sophisticated the handling and color, and thus comparable to eighteenth-century painting, the range of their expressive powers belongs to an older, fuller and less self-conscious world. Nowhere in the eighteenth century would it be possible to find Guido's ability to grasp the raw drama of life, to put it in the most magniloquent of terms, yet to express these with overwhelming psychological intensity and tenderness.

But it is obvious why, with Raphael, Correggio, Titian, and Veronese, the eighteenth century admired Guido most of all the Italians. Though we have other terms and needs, and have added further favorites, the perceptions of eighteenth-century critics are notoriously sound and clear, and cannot be scorned. Of Guido's paintings the great de Piles said "il y a mis une finesse dans les pensées, une noblesse dans les figures, une douceur dans les expressions, une richesse dans les ajustements & une grace par tout, qui lui ont attiré une admiration universelle." Little can be added to that unless one mentions the power and grandeur de Piles took for granted. The Chicago picture stands as most notable testimony to the justice of the traditional appreciation.

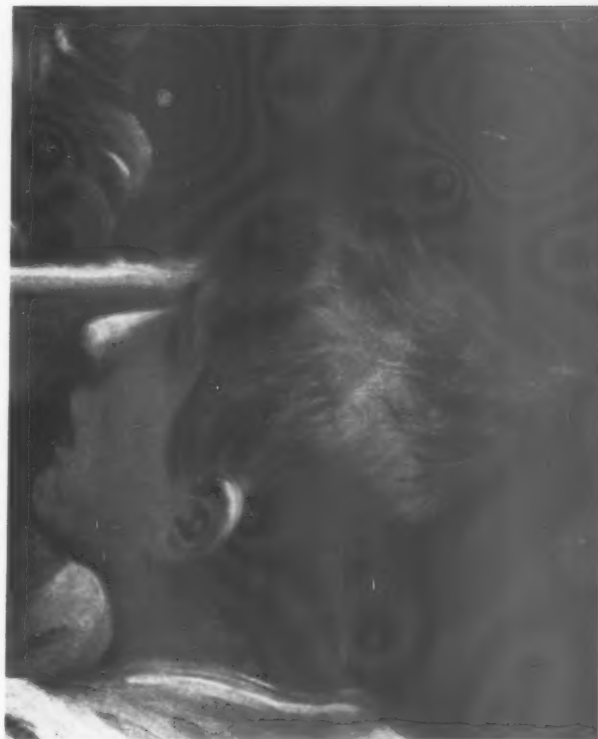
ANTHONY M. CLARK
David E. Finley Fellow
National Gallery of Art

NOTES

¹ *Salome with the Head of the Baptist*. Oil on canvas, 97 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 68 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Bought through the Frank H. and Louise B. Woods Purchase Fund. Accession number 60.3

² A complete publication appears in Professor Federico Zeri's article on the painting in *Paragone*, 121, January, 1960. The Colonna picture previously had been identified incorrectly with what is apparently a studio copy of a variant of the same subject in the John and Mable Ringling Museum, Sarasota.

³ In his engraving Frey took the liberty of completing the unfinished details of the painting in accordance with the then current taste for high finish, as did the author of a copy at Stourhead, Wilts. While among the numerous student drawings after the painting in various drawing cabinets (e.g. the Gilmor collection, Baltimore Museum of Art) the painting is shown both as it was and "finished," it must be remembered that a number of Guido's last works appeared too daringly modern until our own time, just as did Rubens' sketches.



NOTES ON TWO RECENTLY ACQUIRED JAPANESE PORTRAITS

The introduction of Buddhism into Japan in the sixth century provided the impetus for the fine painting and sculpture we associate with the island empire. During the first timid beginnings, Buddhism was probably a very simple religion with a limited number of deities requiring representation, but a scant hundred years later, the faith was in full flood, with a greatly enlarged pantheon. The foundation of new sects required additional pictures and sculptures, and within a few years, exuberance and reverence for the religion prompted the painting and carving not only of gods and guardians, but portrait likenesses of the patriarchs and priests as well.

Shingon, the True Word Sect, was one of the last to develop in China and was introduced in Japan by Kūkai (A.D. 774–835) on his return from the mainland in A.D. 807. This new esoteric aspect of Buddhism aroused great interest, and, because it especially appealed to the court, early acquired a dominant position. Kūkai, better known by his posthumous canonical name, Kōbō Daishi, the Great Teacher Kōbō, as founder and foremost exponent of the sect, was revered by succeeding generations as a saint of the Shingon faith. The headquarters of the group was established deep in the mountains, on Mount Kōya, near Kyoto. The tenets of the faith implied a life of simplicity and denial, and the monastery was, in its early years, probably little more than a collection of rude huts. Imperial favor, however, insured a certain sense of security and patronage, and the hermit-like existence of the monks was shortly practiced in more luxurious, if austere, surroundings. Through the years, Kōyasan, like other important Buddhist centers, became the repository of great collections of art.

Two important 14th century paintings, purporting to be originally from the collection at Kōyasan, have been recently presented to the Art Institute. Both represent Kōbō Daishi, the venerable holy man who founded the sect and the site. In one painting, he is portrayed as a child, called by the Japanese, Chigo Daishi, while in the other, he appears as a mature priest approaching middle age. The Chigo Daishi is a gift of the Joseph and Helen Regenstein Foundation; Robert Allerton presented the painting of the adult Kōbō Daishi.

According to legend, as a boy of five or six, Kōbō dreamed that as he knelt in prayer, he conversed with the Buddha and attendant deities on the principles of Buddhism. It is this moment which is depicted. The boy is seated on a lotus within a golden halo, his hands folded in prayer. The silk ground, both within and outside the halo, is a soft blue. The jacket is pale rose with yellow flowers, some with blue leaves, some with white, and some the deep mineral green repeated in the pod upon which the youth is seated. The petals of the lotus are a soft green with lines of gold. The rose tone of the robe is repeated in the interior portion of the flower. Grey trousers are defined with black lines, strengthened with a white line of even width. The face and hands, too, are white with a subtle rougelike touch of pink on the cheeks. Explanatory panels of calligraphy at the top of the painting give a

Chigo Daishi, or the Priest Kōbō Daishi as a Child. Japanese, early 14th century. Painting in ink and colors on silk, 34 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Accession number 59.552. Gift of the Joseph and Helen Regenstein Foundation. (*Illustrated opposite*)

年始十二歲父母曰我子
 也昔可得弟子以何知之
 夢見後天竺國聖人信來
 入我寺懷如是任胎產
 來也然則吾此不將作佛
 善不善若少之耳爾吾
 一任之常作佛像送還家
 當年並被肉奉私第事此
 時吾父佐伯氏攝岐國
 司度郡人音征敵毛禪
 繼上矣亦阿刀家人也



The Priest Kōbō Daishi. Japanese, 14th century. Painting in ink and colors on silk, 51 x 45 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches.
Accession number 60.40. Gift of Robert Allerton.



resume of the priest's life. They are brushed in black on yellow, white, and green grounds (left to right), each panel set off and edged with gold.

The drawing throughout the composition is extremely fine and controlled. Of special note is the rendering of the long black hair and of the facial features, to which all else is subjugated. Although there is a reserve and formality to the painting, there is no stiffness. Indeed, the composure of pose, the hands, and the half-closed eyes all capture this quiet moment of introspection and revelation. For the viewer, the delicacy of fine touch and soft colors evokes a tender mood of serenity.

Such child portraiture, though somewhat unusual, is evidence of one aspect of courtly taste in the Kamakura Period. The Chigo Daishi exists in at least four other versions, all in Japan. The nearest, in style and quality as well as in pose, to the Art Institute example is the one in the collection of Mr. Nagataka Murayama.¹ This painting was sent to America in 1953 with the touring exhibition of Japanese masterpieces, and proved to be one of the most popular with museum patrons. The Art Institute picture is almost identical, and was probably executed only a few years later. It differs in a slightly more wispy treatment of the hair around the face and in more reserved decoration on the brocaded jacket. The rendering of the trousers is perhaps superior in the painting in the museum collection. Both versions give proof of a high degree of taste and the ability to render convincingly a subject which, for Western eyes at least, could so easily be unnecessarily "sweet."

The portrait of the adult Kōbō is less formal, although the schematic design elements create a certain air of formality. Like the unknown painter of the Chigo Daishi, the anonymous master of this work has captured a moment in time, with the aging monk transfixed in deep and intense contemplation. The intensity is heightened by the fixed gaze of the penetrating black eyes, the blackness of the pupils further accentuated by a fine bounding line of deep red. It is interesting here to note that like the arms of the chair, which the artist has seen fit to terminate in the same direction, the saintly man's eyebrows are identically drawn, growing in each instance from left to right.

With great economy of line and detail, the artist has characterized the head of Kōbō, to which the attention of the viewer is directed. Set on a thick neck and broad heavy shoulders, the figure nonetheless seems dwarfed in the large brocade-bottomed chair. In the right hand is held the *vajra*, symbol of the

thunderbolt, a destroying, but indestructible emblem of Buddhist deities. This object is of painted gold. In the left hand, which rests lightly in the lap, are the black and white prayer beads strung on a red cord. Only on the lips and in the bounding line of the pupils of his eyes is this touch of red repeated. The saffron-colored robes are arranged in conventional, highly schematized pleats and folds, with small areas of shading in a darker tone. Beneath and beside the chair are the priest's black slippers and an ochre-colored medicine bottle. The shoes again have bits of shading, though the vessel is completely flat and patternized. Both are placed and rendered in such a manner as to become an integral, but unobtrusive part of the composition.

Portraits of this type already had several centuries of demand and production prior to the period of the Art Institute painting. Similar in type, but of the 12th century, is the painting of Priest Gonzō by an unknown artist.² Gonzō was noted both for his eloquence as a preacher and as an early teacher of Kōbō Daishi, who inscribed a eulogy to his master above the painting. Though similar in pose and composition, there is sharp contrast in rendering of the personage. Gonzō is shown with animated, gesticulating hands, his mouth half open as he leans forward as though to speak. Both paintings ultimately are based on Chinese portraits of the patriarchs brought by Kōbō himself from China. In the Art Institute painting, which represents the last flowering of the type, great economy of line and abandonment of all but the most essential elements of a portrait have produced a picture of meditative calm that invites the viewer to associate himself with the inner flame that is the man, and, by extension, the faith. Though there is a marked crispness of line and drawing, the mellowing of the silk with time and the rich browns and rust tones have created a warmth and an approachable quality to the painting.

Both the Chigo Daishi and the Kōbō Daishi, in the simple and direct drawing, and through the eyes, first of the young boy, then of the aging priest, evince the deep faith Kōbō did so much to propagate. Both are of great importance for the museum's collection of early Buddhist painting, and will invite and provide interesting comparisons by museum visitors.

JACK V. SEWELL

NOTES

¹See *Exhibition of Japanese Painting and Sculpture*, 1953, No. 14

²*Ibid.*, No. 5

As this picture is of considerable importance, Dr. Soria is publishing it as a work of art, and Dr. Haley, in the article following, describes the cultural background in which it was painted.

MURILLO'S CHRIST AND ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

The Spaniard Bartolomé Estebán Murillo was for several centuries considered one of the world's greatest painters, as famous as Raphael or Michelangelo, more so than Titian or Rubens. His reputation diminished during the first half of this century, but he now begins to emerge again as one of the finest artists of the seventeenth century in his handling of light and his harmonious accords of color.¹ Murillo was born in Seville in 1617 and died there in 1682. Except for a brief trip to Madrid in 1658, he stayed all his life in the province of Andalusia.

It is fortunate that, as part of a generous gift, the Art Institute is able to add to its rich collection of Spanish masterpieces a large painting by Murillo.² *The Christ and St. John the Baptist* symbolizes the passage from John 1:29, ECCE AGNUS DEI QUI TOLLIT PECCATA MUNDI (Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world). The Saviour stands on the left, gathering His violet cloak with hands almost crossed. On the other side of the Jordan, here a narrow brook, the Baptist stands holding a reed cross, his symbol as precursor of Christ. He wears his traditional garments, a red cloak signifying his martyrdom, and a raiment of camel's hair (Matt. 3:4). By placing his right arm pointing to Christ against a light ground, Murillo gave poignant three-dimensional power to this key gesture. A touch of shadow on the palm of the hand makes the fingers come forward as if they were carved in wood.

The grandeur and majesty of Christ's face exalt Him over the Baptist, and the divinity of His glance manifests Him as the Son of God. Far into the distance stretches the luminous landscape of the river Jordan, its blue-grey waters imperceptibly merging with the

horizon. Above Christ is an eagle and a scroll inscribed OMNES CREDERENT PER ILLUM (that all men through him might believe, John 1:7), and above John is a winged bull with the words HIC ERIT MAGNUS CORAM DOMINO (He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, Luke 1:15). Both verses refer to John the Baptist as the precursor of Christ. The eagle is the symbol of John the Evangelist, and the bull signifies Luke, whose Gospel is here quoted.

A companion piece, since 1872 in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England, represents the questioning of John the Baptist by the Pharisees (John 1:19-28). "John answered them saying, 'I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.'" John thus calls himself a precursor of Christ. John also said of himself: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness . . ." This verse (Mark 1:3) in its Latin text, VOX CLAMANTIS IN DESERTO PARATE VIAM DOMINO (The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord), appears written below a winged lion that is the symbol of Mark, at the top of the painting in Cambridge. Next is the symbol of the fourth Evangelist, Matthew, a winged angel and the verse INTER NATOS NON SURREXIT MAIOR (Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist, Matt. 11:11). Murillo's two paintings at Chicago and Cambridge thus refer to John the Baptist, and the symbols of the four Evangelists carry a verse from each of their four Gospels relating to the Baptist.

These two paintings were painted by Murillo about





Murillo, *St. John with Scribes and Pharisees*. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

1655 for 19,000 reales for the Shod Nuns of St. Augustine at the convent of San Leandro in Seville. They surely comprised an altar, together with two other scenes of John the Baptist, and, in the center, one of *Christ Washing the Feet of St. Augustine*. This last picture is in the Walker Art Center at Minneapolis. The altar remained intact until the French occupation of Seville in 1810 when the nuns sold the five paintings to various collectors. The altar is not mentioned by eighteenth-century art historians because it was not in the church, open to the public, but in an interior chapel, in *clausura*. On June 23, 1812, the nuns sold the painting now in Chicago to Antonio Bravo, a wealthy linen maker of Seville. He owned the largest art collection there, comprising at one time more than 800 pictures. Bravo valued the painting at over 100,000 reales, by far the most costly in his collection. It is listed in the handwritten catalogue, made in 1837, under 96 as "the most brilliant picture

by Murillo known," and as being in the Museum of Versailles. Actually, Bravo had sold it in 1835 to Baron Taylor for the famous Spanish Gallery of King Louis Philippe at the Louvre. There a German critic saw it and praised it highly in a review published in the *Kunstblatt* of November 27, 1838.

The French revolution in 1848 was followed by the sale of Louis Philippe's pictures at Christie's in 1853. The painting was bought for 660 pounds for the Duke of Montpensier, a member of Louis Philippe's family. Later it was owned by Lieutenant Colonel Bullen in England, where it remained until now. The other two scenes from this series were the *Baptism of Christ*, last heard of in 1862 when it was bought in at the W. W. Burden sale at Christie's, and another scene from the life of John the Baptist sold by the nuns of San Leandro to Canon López Cepero of Seville. This picture also went through the Louis Philippe sale, no. 73, where it brought only 89 pounds. It has not been documented since. Sir William Maxwell Stirling called it of doubtful authenticity, and Standish, writing in 1840, said it was the weakest of the five.

When Charles Curtis catalogued these pictures in 1883 in his very comprehensive book on *Velázquez and Murillo*, he listed the *Baptism* by mistake twice as number 176 and 178c. The Chicago painting is number 177, but with a wrong title, and the other Louis Philippe painting is number 3361. The Minneapolis painting is number 259; the Cambridge, 334.

During the seventeenth century, the convents and monasteries of Seville participated in a religious rivalry, some rendering ostentatious cult to John the Evangelist, and others to John the Baptist. In their public devotion, the nuns of San Leandro were impartial. Still seen today in their church are the two beautiful altars, carved in 1632 by the greatest sculptor of Spain, Juan Martínez Montañés, one dedicated to John the Baptist, the other to John the Evangelist. In their private worship, under *clausura*, however, the nuns decidedly favored the Baptist, as Murillo's altar proves.

MARTIN SORIA

Michigan State University

NOTES

¹For a re-appraisal of Murillo, see G. Kubler and M. Soria, *The Art and Architecture of Spain and Portugal and their American Dominions 1500-1800*, Pelican History of Art, 1959, pp. 273-278

²*Christ and St. John the Baptist*, painted about 1655. Oil on canvas, 106 x 72 inches. Purchased from the Frank H. and Louise B. Woods Purchase Fund. Accession number 60.2

SOME ASPECTS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN 17th CENTURY SEVILLE

In 1622, when Pope Gregory XV wrote to the Cabildo of Seville on church business in which the city was very much interested, he praised the piety of its inhabitants in extravagant terms. In Seville, the Pope wrote, "the word of the Lord is more beloved than gold or precious stones."¹ Although this generous interpretation may owe more to the Pope's benevolence than to his acquaintance with Seville, the compliment was not an entirely undeserved one. It could even be applied in some measure to the whole of Spain, a country where religion and state have always been closely identified with each other.

Completely alienated from Protestant Europe since the days of the Council of Trent, Spain had by this time expended much of its energy and wealth in defense of the Catholic faith. From the Mediterranean to the Low Countries, Spanish soldiers had fought a long series of wars in the name of religion, while at home, the Inquisition continued to keep an increasingly careful watch over both purity of blood and purity of faith.

Popular support of the church in Seville during the seventeenth century was as strong as it was everywhere else in Spain. Religious foundations endowed by its citizens multiplied to keep pace with the many new religious orders that came into being in that century. By 1676, Diego Ortiz de Zúñiga was able to count almost one hundred and fifty sacred buildings, including churches, monasteries, convents and hospitals, in the city of Seville.²

Veneration of saints and acceptance of miracles, always present, became intensified when the city was beset by the floods and epidemics that occurred so frequently in the seventeenth century. During the great flood of 1626, for instance, when a third of the city lay under water for forty days, the image of Nuestra Señora de los Reyes and a piece of the Lignum Crucis were paraded through the streets, followed by a solemn procession of the faithful. On the same occasion, a painting of Nuestra Señora del

Popolo was seen miraculously riding the floods upright, with its votive light still burning, and the undamaged picture was then donated by its pious owners to the Discalced Augustinians.³

Devotion to certain saints was particularly strong. The Cathedral of Seville, through its representative at the Papal Court, negotiated for many years to bring about the canonization of Saint Ferdinand, which finally occurred in 1671. Belief in the Immaculate Conception, widespread throughout Spain at that time, was especially great in Seville, as Murillo's numerous paintings of this subject can testify. Various Archbishops of Seville in the course of the seventeenth century attempted, with no success, to persuade the Vatican to recognize pious opinion by declaring the Immaculate Conception a church dogma, which it became in 1854. Feeling on this subject ran so high in Seville that, in 1613, when a certain preacher dared to doubt what the clergy and the populace so firmly believed, a city-wide demonstration was organized in order to propitiate the Virgin Mary.⁴

In a century when the clergy was one of the most powerful and wealthy classes in Spain and the Inquisition effectively policed all aspects of life, public demonstrations of one's religion came to be as important as his private conviction. It is therefore not surprising to find that the external features of worship were strongly emphasized and sometimes exaggerated to the point of grotesqueness. Seville, one of the most opulent cities in Spain because of its importance in the New World trade, displayed its riches in elaborate church festivals. The magnificence of its Holy Week celebrations, still to be seen, made Céspedes y Meneses exclaim in 1623 that Seville, "in its public acts and demonstrations is unique. It celebrates the Offices of Holy Week . . . so sumptuously that it by far surpasses Rome. . . ."⁵

The theatrical nature of church festivities during this period can best be seen in Calderón de la Barca's sacramental plays. The *auto sacramental*, long a regular

feature of Corpus Christi celebrations, achieved its most Baroque form in the poetry of Calderón, where theology was presented in ornate language and supported by an equally ornate theatrical apparatus. The *auto de fé*, with a bonfire for a stage, heretics for actors and *sambenitos* for costumes, also demonstrates the spectacular approach to solemn religious acts. When groups of Illuminists and other heretics were discovered in Seville at various times during the first half of the seventeenth century, the Inquisition celebrated *autos* to which the populace thronged in order to be entertained by the punishments that ranged from public ridicule to death at the stake.⁶

The seventeenth-century Spaniard lived in intimate contact with his religion and this familiarity often led to a mixture of the sacred and the profane that went far beyond the limits of good taste. Secular dances turned up in religious processions: one year in Seville, for instance, the saraband was danced in a Corpus Christi procession and was even said to have found its way into various convents, to the horror of Padre Mariana.⁷ Picaresque poems were turned to the use of the faithful after being recast *a lo divino*. Churches were treated as places of assignation by carefully chaperoned ladies who used the holy water font as an excuse for touching their admirers' hands.

The same frivolity that moralists of the period have criticized among laymen was also to be found in religious establishments. Nuns and priests without vocation indulged themselves in worldly practices that are mentioned frequently in satirical literature of the seventeenth century. Typical of the aberrations of the time were the platonic love affairs carried on by nuns with the devout gentlemen (known as *galanes de monjas*) who regularly attended mass at convent churches.⁸

In some cases, it was an excess of religious zeal that produced abuses in the church. Extreme devotion to one saint or another sometimes led to rivalries between religious orders on both a national and a local level. Not long after St. Theresa's canonization, the Cathedral of Seville joined various other Spanish churches, including the Cathedral of Santiago, in opposing the Carmelites who wished to have their founder declared the second patron saint of Spain.⁹ The private preference of the nuns at San Leandro for John the Baptist over John the Evangelist seems to have been reflected in the paintings by Murillo that once adorned their cloister in Seville. An incident in Quevedo's *Buscón* indicates that such petty contests were waged even within the same cloister.

Quevedo satirizes a convent in Toledo (probably an imaginary one), in which the nuns who favored the Baptist ruined the observance of the Evangelist's Day out of spite for their sisters who were partisans of the latter: "... I determined to leave on St. John the Evangelist's Day because I finally realized what nuns are like. I shall only tell you that the Baptists all made themselves hoarse on purpose; they produced such voices that, instead of singing mass, they groaned it; they didn't wash their faces, but they did dress up in old clothes; and in order to discredit the festival, the Baptists' male admirers brought into the church three-legged stools instead of chairs, and a lot of rogues from the slaughter-house."¹⁰

It was, then, in this context that Murillo executed his paintings for the religious institutions of Seville, some of whose practices and abuses were to be altered radically during the cataclysms of the two and a half centuries following the artist's death in 1682.

GEORGE HALEY

The University of Chicago

NOTES

¹ "... sean las palabras del Señor mas amadas, y estimadas, que el oro, y piedras preciosas. . .," in Diego Ortiz de Zúñiga, *Annales eclesiásticos y seculares de la muy noble y muy leal ciudad de Sevilla* (Madrid, 1677), p. 637a.

²*Ibid.*, p. 737b.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 646b-647a.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 613a.

⁵"En sus actos y demostraciones es única. . . Y así los Oficios de Semana Santa celebra, en particular, tan suntuosamente, que deja a Roma . . . muy atrás." In Angel Valbuena Prat, *La vida española en la edad de oro* (Barcelona, 1943), p. 140.

⁶See Francisco Javier García Rodrigo, *Historia verdadera de la Inquisición* (Madrid, 1877), II, 212-226.

⁷Francisco Rodríguez Marín, ed. Cervantes, *Rinconete y Cortadillo* (Seville, 1905), p. 94.

⁸Francisco de Quevedo, *Vida del Buscón*, ed. Luys Santa Marina (Madrid, 1951), pp. 201-207.

⁹Ortiz de Zúñiga, p. 653a.

¹⁰"... determinéme el día de San Juan Evangelista, porque acabé de conocer lo que son monjas. Y no quiera v.m. saber más de que las Bautistas todas enroquecieron adrede, y sacaron tales voces, que en vez de cantar la misa, la gimieron; no se lavaron las caras, y se vistieron de viejo; y los devotos de las Bautistas, por desautorizar la fiesta, trujeron banquetas en lugar de sillas á la iglesia, y muchos pícaros del rastro." Quevedo, p. 206.

PISSARRO'S YOUNG WOMAN MENDING

Although the Art Institute possesses an unrivalled collection of French Impressionist paintings, with especially notable groups by Monet and Renoir, the representation of Camille Pissarro has until recently been relatively unimportant. Mrs. Leigh B. Block's gift of a figure piece, *Young Woman Mending*, of 1895 fills admirably the need of a characteristic late work. Rosa, a maid in the Pissarro household, was the model for this compact, solidly modeled figure of a peasant girl who concentrates unself-consciously on her mending. Pissarro, unlike many other French artists who either idealized or sentimentalized peasant types, depicted his models honestly and unaffectedly.

In a letter to his son, Lucien, dated December 4, 1895, Pissarro wrote: "I am doing several figures from our Rosa; they are developing with more sureness; I am quite pleased with a canvas of about 25x21 inches, *Peasant Girl Selling at a Market*, which is closely related to my figures of 1882-83, with a little more freshness." In the same letter, he had complained that he was having difficulty finishing some large figure paintings which he was leaving around his studio waiting for a final moment of inspiration. As a change he turned to smaller canvases and in the studies of Rosa, such as the one under discussion, felt satisfaction and a sense of achievement.

Although Pissarro had lived in France during most of his life since the age of twelve, he had been born in the Danish West Indies, a fact which he regarded as a handicap since he was sometimes excluded from French exhibitions. He is, nevertheless, a major figure in the group who in the 1870s revolted against established traditions. He did not, however, consider that he was a revolutionary but felt rather that he and the other Impressionists were merely adding new facets to the great tradition of French painting. As a young

man he had been encouraged by Corot to frequent the ateliers of official painters but he preferred to observe nature and people in natural settings. Both Corot and Courbet influenced his work of the sixties, but through Manet and the group which he encountered at the Café Guerbois he learned to lighten his palette. While in London, when he fled from the German invasion of 1871, he was profoundly impressed by the sunburst coloring of the work of Turner and the luminous paintings of Constable. On returning to France he became firmly associated with the group who were soon to be known as the Impressionists and exhibited with them in their first showing in 1874. Although he continued to show with this group, he had many differences of opinion with them as he did not share Monet's views about dissolving form in light. In 1885 Pissarro met Seurat and was influenced to some extent by his style but finding this technique too arduous, returned to his earlier manner.

Increasing sales from more frequent exhibitions resulted in Pissarro's attaining financial security during his final years. *Young Woman Mending* is a product of this period when he was no longer harrassed by the problems of bringing up seven children on a meager income. He painted surrounding areas of the city which delighted him, did numerous scenes of the streets and squares of Paris, but perhaps his most carefully considered canvases were the figure pieces. From Eragny in 1895 he wrote Lucien that he was working steadily at his figure paintings, a subject which he obviously took with great seriousness.

While Pissarro remained always an Impressionist in that he made use of the comma brush stroke, unmixed colors and suffused lighting, he achieved, nevertheless, within this format a sense of firm modeling and well-rounded form. This interest in structure was due

Camille Pissarro (1830–1903), *Young Woman Mending*. Oil on canvas, 25 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 21 $\frac{3}{8}$ in., signed and dated at lower left: C. Pissarro 1895. Accession number 59.636, Gift of Mrs. Leigh B. Block.



to some extent to his admiration for Cézanne, that "refined savage" as he called him, whose work he found strange and disconcerting, unfinished though much worked on, yet despite this was "grandiose" and of "irreproachable perfection." Pissarro was of course mindful of the fact that he had greatly influenced Cézanne when they worked together at Pontoise in the early seventies but subsequently they developed along quite different lines. In contrast to Cézanne's thinly applied paint, Pissarro uses a fairly heavy impasto. His mauve stripes in Rosa's blouse are actually a combination of purple, gray and white strokes which at a short distance melt into a muted mauve tone. Her reddish hair is red-brown, pink and gray, while her ruddy complexion is achieved by overlaying strokes of deep rose on a pale pink base. This overall grainy effect gives a rich texture while uniformly modulated colors result in a tonal unity. Wide stripes

on the table cover and narrower stripes in the blouse constitute a theme around which the design of the painting is constructed. The solidly modeled head with glowing color, placed off-center at the upper left, becomes the dominant motif within the framework of this well-constructed design. More significant than considerations of color, design or technique is the deep concentration of the figure which results in a strong psychological intensity. Pissarro's deep interest in humanity is reflected in the honesty and integrity of his figure compositions among which *Young Woman Mending* is a vital and enduring example.

FREDERICK A. SWEET

REFERENCES: *Camille Pissarro, son art, son oeuvre*, edited by Paul Rosenberg (Paris, 1939), no. 934, p. 210, ill. Pl. 189; *Camille Pissarro, Letters to his Son Lucien*, edited by John Rewald (New York c1943), p. 277

PEVSNER, continued from page 2

tween them. It is of interest that before the first world war people emerged from the world of Russia who were passionate about reality, space, and time. There is in the intensity of this passion something which is curiously and ineluctably romantic, and I believe it is this romantic intensity which gives the work of Pevsner its power, just as the clarity of his forms gives his work its logical beauty.

JOHN MAXON

NOTES

¹ Antoine Pevsner was born in Orel, Russia, in

1886. He studied in Kiev and Leningrad. He worked in Paris in 1911, and from 1913 through 1914; he was in Norway from 1914 through 1917. From 1917 through 1922 he lived in Moscow, and since 1923 he has lived in Paris.

² In 1920

³ This is nicely summarized by Herbert Read in his introduction to Ruth Olson's and Abraham Chanin's *Naum Gabo, Antoine Pevsner*, New York (Museum of Modern Art), 1948, p. 10, and in Andrew Ritchie's *Sculpture of the Twentieth Century*, New York, n.d., p. 44.



